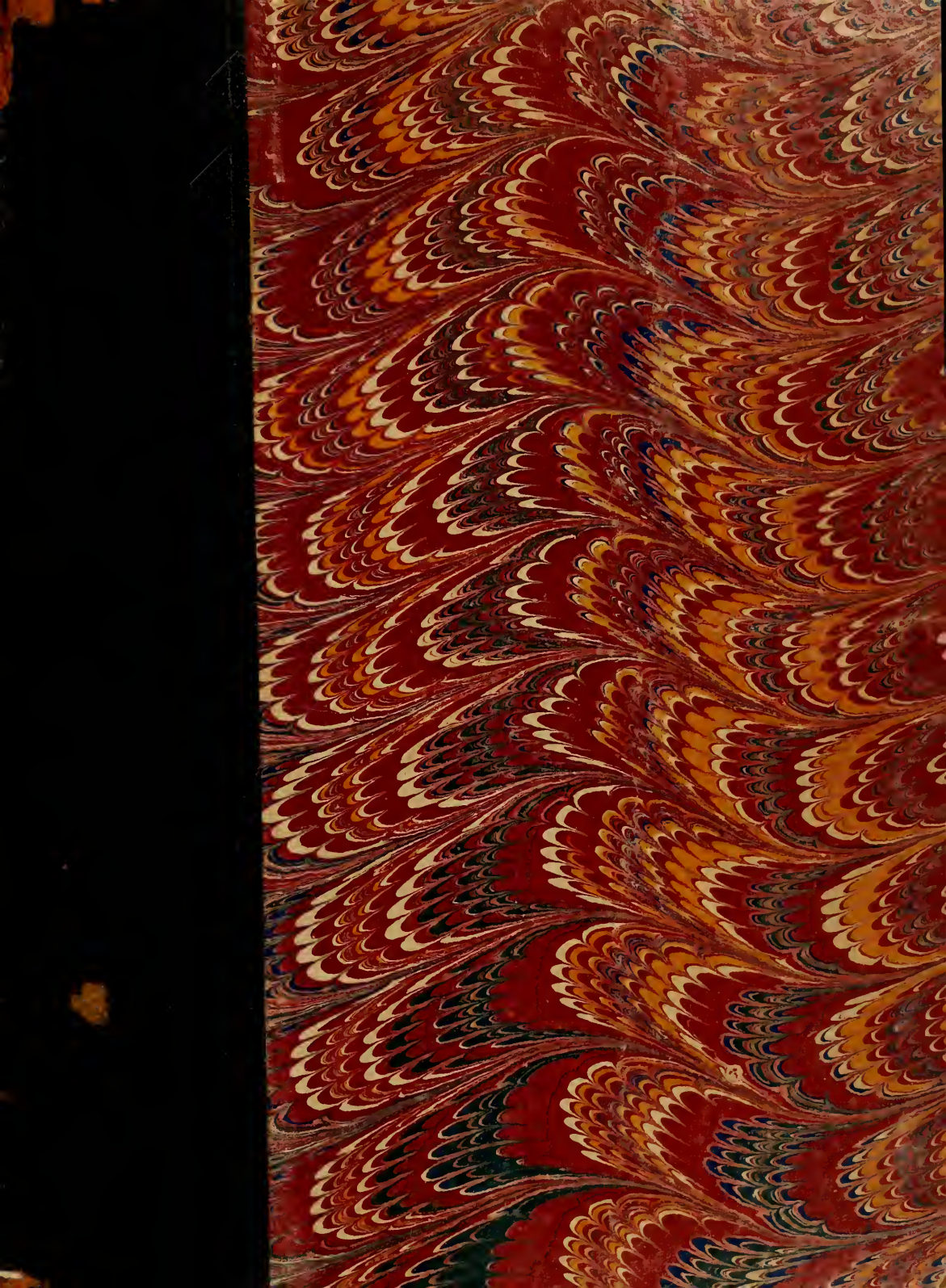

Library of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

SCC
5134

Division Hymnal

Section Hymns

Shelf

Number

MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. JAMES WADDEL, D.D.

BY

JAMES WADDEL ALEXANDER, D.D.

1880.

This Memoir of the Rev. Dr. Waddel, by his grandson, was published in the WATCHMAN OF THE SOUTH, *a religious paper of Richmond, Va., in* 1844. *It is now put in a permanent form to perpetuate the memory of an eminently holy, learned, and eloquent father of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.*

REV. JAMES WADDEL, D.D.

JAMES WADDEL was the son of Thomas Waddel, and was born in the north of Ireland, in the month of July, of the year 1739, as is believed. He was brought in his infancy by his parents to America. They settled in the south-eastern part of Pennsylvania, near the State line, on White Clay Creek. Thomas Waddel had four children, William, Robert, James, and Sally. Of these, only one remained unmarried. The elder sons removed to the western district of Pennsylvania, near the Ohio, where their descendants remain.

Old Mrs. Waddel was a woman of eminent Christian knowledge and piety, and brought with her to America the methods of ancient Scottish Presbyterianism. To her advices, her son ascribed his first religious convictions. He was a frail boy, and an incident of his child-

hood left its mark on him for life. When he was about twelve years of age, he went in company with one of his brothers to chase a hare. The little creature took refuge in a hollow tree, or log; and as James was pointing out the spot, his brother let fall a hatchet on the place, which struck the left hand of the younger boy, and almost severed it from the wrist. Throughout his life, this hand was small, and in a great degree useless. This induced his father to give him an education. Accordingly, he was sent to Nottingham, about fifteen miles distant, to the school of the Rev. Dr. Finley, afterward President of New Jersey College. It was an academy of high reputation. The late venerable Mr. Samuel Houston, in a letter to my mother, of date November 10, 1835, speaks as follows:

"In his familiar hours, [Dr. Waddel] sometimes gave me anecdotes of his early life. One was of his mother [and of] the morning he left home, to go to a grammar school, some distance from their abode. When she

had made ready all things for his departure, she took him into a private room, and said to him, weeping, 'James, my dear son, you are going from under my care. I entreat you, be careful to pray, and to keep God's Sabbaths. Hence, on that holy day, spend not your time in bad company, or with Sabbath-breakers.' Then, handing him two little religious books, she said, 'Take these books, and read them for your mother's sake;' and falling on her knees, she prayed very feelingly for him. Dr. Waddel has told me that this parting deeply affected him, and had a very salutary effect. The books he often read; and though he had in his library other books on the same subjects, he prized these volumes more than all, for his mother's sake."

From the school of Dr. Finley proceeded a number of eminent men. Among these were Dr. Benjamin Rush, who often used to speak of Dr. Waddel, to whom he had recited lessons; and Judge Jacob Rush, Ebenezer Hazard, of Philadelphia; Dr. McWhorter, old Dr. Tennent, and Governor Martin, of North Carolina. Mr. Hazard used to exhibit a manual of Prosody, in the handwriting of Waddel; and

it was observed of the latter, that, late in life, he evinced the nicety of his ear, in regard to quantity, by correcting, with some impatience, the barbarous pronunciation of gentlemen who read Latin to him during his blindness. There was no Presbyterian college, as yet; at this school, therefore, he studied the classics, mathematics, logic, and all the branches which were considered necessary preparations for the learned calling.

I am indebted to my father's report of Dr. Waddel's own words, for the statement, that during this period his mind was subjected to remarkable religious impressions. Though attached to the school, he underwent these changes at his father's house. The exercises of his mind were deep and affecting, but not occasioned by any external means. After great distress, he was led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. On two occasions, in particular, he was favored with such views of the plan of salvation and the glory of Gospel grace,

as he never afterward enjoyed. Dr. Finley conversed with him, instructed him more fully, and at length admitted him to the communion of the Church.

Such was Mr. Waddel's proficiency, that Dr. Finley took him, at an early age, to be his assistant. He gave himself chiefly to the classics, in which he was, all his life, singularly versed. It may be mentioned, as evincing his zeal in these pursuits, that at a public examination, he once became acquainted with the superior attainments of a British scholar, Campbell by name, which so roused him that he could not rest until he had sought out this gentleman, and solicited his private aid in regard to philological methods.

At that day there was another noted Presbyterian school at Pequea, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, under the care of the elder Smith, known as the father of those great scholars and eloquent divines, John Blair Smith and Samuel Stanhope Smith, men whose

names are connected with the presidentship of at least three of our colleges. From this school proceeded as many as fifty young men, afterward ministers of the Gospel. As a nursery of Presbyterian talent and devotion, it ought never to be forgotten. To this seminary Mr. Waddel went from Nottingham, as an assistant teacher. After a year or more in this employment, he set forth on his travels, in pursuance of a long-cherished plan, determined, it is thought, to devote himself to teaching, and in expectation of being settled in Charleston, S. C. As he pursued his way, he stopped at Upper Marlborough, in Maryland, where a Presbyterian church had already been founded. He seems to have had solicitations to remain there; but not finding a situation to his mind, he continued his journey southward, until he reached the county of Hanover, in Virginia: a county signalized by three names, great in the annals of eloquence—need I mention Samuel Davies, Patrick Henry, and Henry

Clay? From Mr. Houston's letter I make the following extract, which stands, however, amidst some statements that are incorrect, as to date: "When he came into Virginia, a young man, he visited Mr. Samuel Davies, and heard him preach in Hanover, near where Col. Henry lived, the father of Patrick Henry, to whom he was introduced on the Sabbath, and with whom he went home. At parting, Mr. Davies told him he would find that Virginians observed not the Sabbath as the Pennsylvanians, and that he would have to bear with many things he would wish otherwise. Accordingly, as he went home with Col. H. he found him much more conversant with Virgil and Horace than the Bible." The meeting with Mr. Davies gave a direction to young Waddel's life. This holy man laid his hands on the youth—much as Farel, in a celebrated instance, did on Calvin at Geneva—and not only forbade him to go further, but charged him to devote himself to the ministry of the Word. Before this, he had

been studying medicine; but now, seeing the need of preachers and teachers, in the "Old Colony and Dominion," he consented to abide. We next find him in the county of Louisa, which eventually became the place of his last labors and sufferings. Here he placed himself under the direction of the Rev. Mr. Todd, a man famous in our Church annals, who then taught a flourishing school. For the third time Mr. Waddel became an instructor; having, moreover, the use of Mr. Todd's excellent library, and his learned counsel and guidance in the study of theology. In this retreat he remained, until he was licensed as a probationer, at Tinkling Spring, on the 2d of April, 1761, by the (old) Presbytery of Hanover. His trial sermons were from the texts, Phil. ii. 9, 10, *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him*, etc.; and John v. 40, *And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* It is worthy of record, that at a meeting of Presbytery at the same place, on the 17th of October,

the same year, no fewer than five calls were put into his hands; to wit, one from Upper Falling and the Peaks of Otter; one from Nutbush and Grassy Creek; one from Brown's Meeting-house and Jennings'-Gap; one from the Fork of James River, in Augusta; and one from Halifax: "none of which," says the Presbyterial record, "he thought fit to take under consideration." Indeed, his mind was, at that time, made up to return to Pennsylvania, and he was not without expectation of a settlement at York. He, therefore, left Virginia, and returned to visit his parents. And when afterward he revisited Virginia, it was with the view of seeking a dismission from the Presbytery. Providence, however, had other plans. When the judicatory met, there appeared before it, as commissioners from the county of Lancaster (Va.), Col. James Gordon and Capt. Selden. These pious and determined men made such representations of the spiritual wants of their country, that Mr. Wad-

del admitted the call of God, and entirely changed his intention. On the 7th of October, 1762, when the Presbytery met at Providence, he signified his acceptance of a call to the churches of Lancaster and Northumberland, lying between the great rivers Potomac and Rappahannock, and near their mouths. He was ordained at Prince Edward, June 16, 1762. His sermon was upon the words, Rom. x. 4, *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* At the same time and place he received a call from Opaken and Cedar Creek.

There is in my possession, in manuscript, a fragment of a private diary, kept by Col. James Gordon, of Lancaster, from Dec. 21, 1758, to Dec. 31, 1763; alas! that it contains no more! This autograph comprises, of course, the period of Mr. Waddel's settlement and early labors in Lancaster. That the gentlemen of that prosperous region were not unmindful of their Presbyterian ancestry, is apparent from

their zeal in procuring a pastor, as well as from the extent and vigor of the churches which they formed. Col. Gordon never lets a day pass without an entry in his journal, and seldom fails to record the preacher's text, and often the psalms and hymns used in worship. At one time, I find as many as twelve persons elected as ruling elders. The number of communicants was large, and the power of the Gospel was manifest. That their solemn assemblies were not without special interest, may be gathered from the facts, that Mr. Davies preached very often to them, and Mr. Whitefield a number of times.

Notwithstanding the warmth of his reception, Mr. Waddel did not expect to remain long in Lancaster; but several circumstances changed his views. He found so much hospitality, intelligence, and polish among these old Virginian gentry, and so many orthodox and pious Presbyterians among the wealthy planters, and merchants (for there was a direct and

brisk trade with Great Britain from the mouths of the rivers), that all his reluctance was overcome. Moreover, it was not long before he was united in marriage to Mary Gordon, the daughter of Col. James Gordon above named. This event took place about the year 1768. (It may not be inappropriate to add that a portrait of this ancient servant of Christ is possessed by this descendant, John Newton Gordon, of Richmond). Mr. Waddel, after his marriage, was established by his father-in-law in a new and commodious house on Curratoman River. And here he would cheerfully have spent his life, amidst extraordinary usefulness and in the bosom of a loving people, but for the ill effects of the climate. He has often said, that such was its influence on his state of health, that he passed no year without an attack of intermittent fever; and that many a sermon was delivered by him when he could scarcely stand erect. His labors were not slight, as he had three preaching places; name-

ly, Lancaster Court-House; the Forest Meeting-house, six or seven miles distant; and Northumberland Meeting-house, in the county of that name. To call these churches anything but "meeting-houses," would have been a solecism in the dialect of the then dominant hierarchy; and the phraseology of the Establishment is retained even by many, at this day, who do not willingly mean any concession to "THE CHURCH."

That Mr. Waddel was a "new-side man," may be inferred from a saying of his, remembered by the late Mr. Patillo; who related that when news came, during a meeting of Presbytery, of the reunion of Presbyterians, after the great schism, Mr. Waddel exclaimed, with characteristic animation, "Now we shall fall into the hands of those old fellows, over the mountain!" meaning the rigid ministers of the "Old Side." It is proper to state, that any fears which he may have had were readily disappointed when he came to know the men.

It is to be regretted that materials are so scanty for a history of Mr. Waddel's churches in Lancaster and Northumberland. A few anecdotes have been saved from oblivion, and of these, one or two shall here find a place. Among the most active members of the Church was Col. Sherman. The circumstances of his conversion were remarkable. While yet a thoughtless youth, he was led by curiosity to go to one of Mr. Whitefield's preaching-places: it was Lane's Meeting-house. Such was the multitude assembled, that entrance by the door had become impracticable when young Sherman arrived. He therefore joined himself to a throng of persons who were struggling violently for admission at a window. Just as he had apparently gained his point, he was shouldered out by a man of great size; but not before he had been long enough within hearing to catch the words of the text—"And they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, *and the door was shut.*"—Matt. xxv.

10. By this strikingly seasonable passage his conscience was awakened.

On a certain occasion, a ship, owned by Col. Gordon, came in after a long voyage. The crew had not heard a sermon for some months; and being told that there would be divine service at Lancaster Meeting-house, they went four miles to reach the place. They were late in arriving, and found the house overflowed. Being compelled to stand in the aisle, they, nevertheless, gave unbroken attention. This was particularly true of one seaman, who drank in every word. The text was—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" It so happened that Simon was the name of this stranger. As the preacher advanced in his sermon, he took occasion to say, "My brethren, if Jesus should this day make His appearance among us, what would be your reply, when His question should be put to each of you individually, "*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?*" The poor sailor could refrain no longer. With flowing

tears, he cried out, so as to be heard by all present: "*Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee!*" The effect upon the assembly was such that weeping and sobs burst from every part of the house.

Though there was an "open door," there were "many adversaries." While Mr. Waddel was once preaching in Lancaster Meeting-house, a ruffian, who had been offended by some act or word of his, opened the door opposite to the pulpit, advanced to a point near the speaker, and presented a loaded pistol at him. Col. Gordon, not having time for cooler methods, or for any deliberation, wrested the pistol from the fellow, and with his walking-stick, prostrated him at once. The unfortunate assailant turned out to be a drunkard of the neighborhood; and Col. Gordon employed a physician for the cure of his broken head.

The churches of the Northern Neck owed much to the zeal and liberality of this good elder; and after his death they immediately

began to decline. This declension must, however, be ascribed in part to other causes, and especially to the removal of their pastor. Although they continued to exist, and were from time to time supplied by members of the Presbytery, they dwindled away, and the communicants fell off to other sects, particularly that of the Baptists. As late as the years 1793 and 1794 (as I learn from the personal observations of my father), they still maintained their integrity, and enjoyed the administration of the sacraments. At such times large congregations attended. But the war of the Revolution had made sad ravages upon their territory. The Presbyterians of these two counties belonged to the first class of Virginians, for respectability and wealth. But the British squadrons found ready access to their exposed estates; and the soldiery made frequent incursions, carrying off property, so as for a time to hold possession of the country. This was one great cause of the decline of Presbyterianism in the lower counties.

When, about the year 1775, Mr. Waddel, with a constitution almost ruined, reluctantly determined to leave Lower Virginia, he turned his attention to Tinkling Spring, in Augusta, to which, it will be remembered, he had been called fifteen years before. His second call to this church was accepted May 1, 1766. The church had been several years vacant. Their last pastor had been Mr. Craig. Mr. Waddel purchased land on the South River, a branch of the Shenandoah, and sat down to renew his labors. Disease had done a severe work on him. His frame was attenuated, and his voice was impaired; yet, even under these disqualifications, he drew crowds of hearers whenever it was known that he was to preach. He often assisted Mr. Brown, of Providence, at the Lord's Supper; and on these occasions multitudes attended from all the adjacent country. He also preached about once every fortnight, at Staunton. In the year 1783 a call was made for his services by the united congrega-

tions of Staunton and Tinkling Spring. This call now lies before me. It bears the signature of Alexander St. Clair and Wm. Bower, on the part of the Staunton people; and the salary offered by the two congregations was forty-five pounds, Virginia money. The place of Mr. Waddel's residence was called Spring Hill, and it is now occupied, as I am told, by Dr. McChesney. During his residence in Augusta, which may have been about seven years, his health was entirely restored.

The last earthly removal of Mr. Waddel was to an estate which he had purchased on the other side of the mountain. This he named Hopewell. The house was in Louisa, but the property, amounting, perhaps, to a thousand acres, lay also in the counties of Orange and Albemarle. It may be seen from the public road, by those who go from Gordonsville to the University of Virginia. It was during his residence here that Mr. Waddel received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Dickinson's

College. At this college his elder sons received their education. This title, even in days when it was rare, was one in which it is believed he could take no complacency. At Hopewell he became, for the fourth time, a classical teacher, and took pupils into his own house. I have heard the late Governor Barbour say, that he enjoyed these instructions for several years. Another pupil was Merriwether Lewis, the celebrated companion of Clarke, in the expedition beyond the Rocky Mountains. During this period, Dr. Waddel preached at several places; namely, at the "D. S." church, about three miles from Charlottesville, a post now abandoned; at Clarksville, in a log-house; at the Brick Church, near Orange Court-house; and at a small edifice, erected by himself, near the place where Gordonsville now stands. From these labors, as might be conjectured, he derived but little emolument; he was supported by his teaching and his agriculture. His library was good, and his interest in learning

was unabated. All who knew him attest the extent and accuracy of his acquirements. At a period when clerical studies were hardly earned, and remote as he was from the great literary marts, he nevertheless kept himself advised of what the learned world was doing. It is known that the speculations of Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley, in particular, awakened his profound attention. The period of his residence in Louisa may be set down at twenty years. There he ended his days; and there, according to his request, he was buried in his own garden.

For a part of this time, Dr. Waddel was afflicted with blindness. A cataract seized first one eye, and then the other, leaving him in total darkness. To this affliction he alludes in a letter dictated by him to Dr. James Priestley, of date Sept. 17, 1800: "Since I saw you at my house, I have experienced changes; the most painful of which have been the death of children and *the loss of sight.* The last,

through divine goodness, has been partially restored; but not so as to enable me to read, nor even to recognize my old acquaintances, though partly sufficient for my walking and riding about. And several grandchildren, in the other case, make some redress for the wastes of death. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" The partial recovery alluded to in this letter was due to the operation of couching, performed by Dr. Tyler, of Fredericktown, in Maryland. At first, as is not uncommon in such cases, great inflammation set in, and there was little hope of advantage. But after some months he slowly recovered the sight of one eye. I wish it was in my power to insert here an affecting account of the scene when he was restored to day, as written by his youngest son, Lyttelton Waddel, Esq., of Staunton. During the greatest prevalence of this calamity, he nevertheless continued to preach the Gospel.

In person Dr. Waddel was tall and erect; when a young man, he is said to have been of striking appearance. His complexion was fair, and he had a light blue eye. His mien was that of unusual dignity. Mr. Wirt once said to me: "Dr. Waddel's manners were elegant and graceful; I should say *courtly*, if that word did not seem to import an efflorescence of manner, which did not belong to him." That Mr. Wirt represents him as preaching in a white linen cap, is excusable, on the ground that this was really a part of his domestic costume; but when he went abroad, he always wore a large, full-bottomed wig, perfectly white.

In the decline of life, and on his death-bed, Dr. Waddel manifested the calmness and resignation which might have been expected. To his son-in-law, the Rev. Mr. Calhoon, who had removed to Augusta, but who was then in attendance, he expressed his persuasion that the time of his departure was at hand; adding, with

emphasis, that he had no more fears of dying than of lying down to sleep. To his son Addison (now Dr. W., of Staunton), who ventured to express an affectionate hope that his father's end was not so near as he said, he replied, with an expressive smile, "My son! you do not think your father is afraid to die?" A lady, who visited him during his last illness, once said: "If, sir, I had lived such a life as yours, I should not fear death." "Madam," he replied, "if this were my dependence, I might fear indeed; my only hope is in Jesus Christ." He had taken great pains to prepare his family for the impending event. That they might be less annoyed by his dying struggles, he even caused his chamber to be exchanged for one which was more remote. And he expressed a decided wish to be left alone when he should come to the final moment. When the time came, being restless and in pain, and observing the assiduous attentions of those about him, he said, "Let me die! Take the pillow from be-

neath my head;" then, with great serenity, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Very soon after he expired. Some time before his death he gave orders that all his manuscripts should be committed to the flames; that there should be no needless ceremonies at his interment; and that his body should be carried to the grave by his own faithful servant-men. The records of Hanover Presbytery enable me to say, that his decease was reported to that body at a meeting at Pisgah, as having occurred on the 17th of September, 1805.

The manner of his death was such as might have been expected from a life of eminent piety and singular self-control. He had lived in expectation of it. One of his sons relates the tender impressions produced on the circle of children, collected on a Sunday evening, as their manner was, for religious instruction, when he spoke of his own death as an event not far off. The same son remembers to have seen his father on his bed bathed in tears.

When inquired of by his sympathizing family as to the cause of this emotion, he said that it was no new thing—that he was overwhelmed with a sense of his Redeemer's grace, and of his own unworthiness.

In traveling through my native State, it has given me great pleasure to observe the veneration felt for the memory of Dr. Waddel. The truth is, he was a man of no neutral character; but of penetrating intellect, adventurous boldness of thought, and mature learning, and at the same time of tender susceptibilities and kindly warmth. He was stirring and energetic in an unusual degree. And it is the concurrent testimony of all his contemporaries and friends, that for personal intrepidity he had no superior. By his grave, as truly as by that of Knox, it might have been said: "There lies one who never feared the face of man." This was shown in a number of instances in private life, in which he rebuked profaneness and irre-

ligion with insupportable sarcasm; as well as in the pulpit, from which he was the scourge of prevailing infidelity and formalism.

Of his eloquence it is difficult to speak so as to gratify public expectation. It has become matter of tradition in Virginia. It was of the sort which electrifies whole assemblies, transfusing to them the speaker's passion, at his will—a species, I must be allowed to say, which I seldom have heard except in the South. Under his preaching, as many have declared to me, audiences were moved simultaneously and irresistibly, as the trees of the wood are shaken by the winds. Especially was his power great in so painting his sacred scenes, as to bring the hearer into the very presence of the object. These faculties displayed themselves as really in private as in public; so that his ordinary discourse was an uncommon treat to intellectual persons. It was this which caused his company to be sought by the first men of his time. When he rose in scornful

argument, it was like a sweeping torrent which carries everything before it. For these statements I have the authority of my father, of the venerable Mr. Mitchell, of Governor Barbour, and of Mr. Wirt. But after what has been written by the last of these, it is difficult to treat the subject with propriety. I shall, therefore, insert in this connection, some passages from the "British Spy," premising that the original date of the publication was the year 1803, when Dr. Waddel was approaching the end of life. Under the *incognito* of a British officer, Mr. Wirt thus addresses his correspondent:

THE BLIND PREACHER.

"It was one Sunday, as I traveled through the county of Orange, that my eye was caught by a cluster of horses tied near a ruinous, old, wooden house in the forest, not far from the road-side. Having frequently seen such objects before, in traveling through these States, I had no difficulty in understanding that this was a place of religious worship.

"Devotion alone should have stopped me to join in

the duties of the congregation; but I must confess, that curiosity to hear the preacher of such a wilderness was not the least of my motives. On entering, I was struck with his preternatural appearance. He was a tall and very spare old man; his head, which was covered with a white linen cap, his shriveled hands, and his voice, were all shaking under the influence of a palsy; and a few moments ascertained to me that he was perfectly blind.

"The first emotions that touched my breast were those of mingled pity and veneration. But how soon were all my feelings changed! The lips of Plato were never more worthy of a prognostic swarm of bees, than were the lips of this holy man! It was a day of the administration of the sacraments; and his subject was, of course, the passion of our Saviour. I had heard the subject handled a thousand times—I had thought it exhausted long ago. Little did I suppose that in the wild woods of America I was to meet with a man whose eloquence would give to this topic a new and more sublime pathos than I had ever before witnessed.

"As he descended from the pulpit to distribute the mystic symbols, there was a peculiar, a more than human solemnity in his air and manner, which made my blood run cold, and my whole frame shiver.

"He then drew a picture of the sufferings of our

Saviour; His trial before Pilate; His ascent up Calvary; His crucifixion; and His death. I knew the whole history; but never until then had I heard the circumstances so selected, so arranged, so colored! It was all new; and I seemed to have heard it for the first time in my life. His enunciation was so deliberate, that his voice trembled on every syllable; and every heart in the assembly trembled in unison. His peculiar phrases had that force of description, that the original scene appeared to be at that moment acting before our eyes. We saw the very faces of the Jews; the staring, frightful distortions of malice and rage. We saw the buffet; my soul kindled with a flame of indignation; and my hands were involuntarily and convulsively clenched.

"But when he came to touch on the patience, the forgiving meekness of our Saviour; when he drew, to the life, His blessed eyes streaming in tears to heaven, His voice breathing to God a soft and gentle prayer of pardon on His enemies, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' the voice of the preacher, which had all along faltered, grew fainter and fainter, until, his utterance being entirely obstructed by the force of his feelings, he raised his handkerchief to his eyes, and burst into a loud and irrepressible flood of grief. The effect was inconceivable. The whole house resounded with the mingled groans and sobs and shrieks of the congregation.

"It was some time before the tumult subsided, so far as to permit him to proceed. Indeed, judging by the usual, but fallacious standard of my own weakness, I began to be very uneasy for the situation of the preacher; for I could not conceive how he would be able to let his audience down from the height to which he had wound them, without impairing the solemnity and dignity of his subject, or perhaps shocking them by the abruptness of the fall. But no; the descent was as beautiful and sublime as the elevation had been rapid and enthusiastic.

"The first sentence with which he broke the awful silence, was a quotation from Rousseau: 'Socrates died like a philosopher; but Jesus Christ, like a God!'

"I despair of giving you any idea of the effect produced by this short sentence, unless you could perfectly conceive the whole manner of the man, as well as the peculiar crisis in the discourse. Never before did I completely understand what Demosthenes meant by laying such stress on delivery. You are to bring before you the venerable figure of the preacher; his blindness constantly recalling to your recollection old Homer, Ossian, and Milton, and associating with his performance the melancholy grandeur of their geniuses; you are to imagine that you hear his slow, solemn, well-accented enunciation, and his voice of affecting, trembling

melody; you are to remember the pitch of passion and enthusiasm to which the congregation were raised; and then the few moments of portentous, death-like silence which reigned throughout the house; the preacher, removing his white handkerchief from his aged face (even yet wet from the recent torrent of his tears), and slowly stretching forth the palsied hand which holds it, begins the sentence: 'Socrates died like a philosopher'—then pausing, raising his other hand, pressing them both, clasped together, with warmth and energy, to his breast, lifting his 'sightless balls' to heaven, and pouring his whole soul into his tremulous voice—'but Jesus Christ—like a God!' If he had been in deed and in truth an angel of light, the effect could scarcely have been more divine.

"Whatever I had been able to conceive of the sublimity of Massillon or the force of Bourdaloue, had fallen far short of the power which I felt from the delivery of this simple sentence. The blood, which just before had rushed in a hurricane upon my brain, and, in the violence and agony of my feelings, had held my whole system in suspense, now ran back into my heart with a sensation which I can not describe—a kind of shuddering, delicious horror! The paroxysm of blended pity and indignation, to which I had been transported, subsided into the deepest self-abasement, humility, and

adoration. I had just been lacerated and dissolved by sympathy for our Saviour as a fellow-creature; but now, with fear and trembling, I adored Him as a God.

"If this description gives you the impression that this incomparable minister had anything of shallow, theatrical trick in his manner, it does him great injustice. I have never seen, in any other orator, such a union of simplicity and majesty. He has not a gesture, an attitude, or an accent, to which he does not seem forced by the sentiment he is expressing. His mind is too serious, too earnest, too solicitous, and at the same time too dignified, to stoop to artifice. Although as far removed from ostentation as a man can be, yet it is clear, from the train, the style, and substance of his thoughts, that he is not only a very polite scholar, but a man of extensive and profound erudition. I was forcibly struck with a short, yet beautiful, character which he drew of your learned and amiable countryman, Sir Robert Boyle; he spoke of him as if 'his noble mind had, even before death, divested herself of all influence from his frail tabernacle of flesh;' and called him, in his peculiarly emphatic and impressive manner, 'a pure intelligence, the link between men and angels.'

"This man has been before my imagination almost ever since. A thousand times, as I rode along, I dropped the reins of my bridle, stretched forth my hand, and

tried to imitate his quotation from Rousseau; a thousand times I abandoned the attempt in despair, and felt persuaded that his peculiar manner and power arose from an energy of soul, which nature could give, but which no human being could justly copy. In short, he seems to be altogether a being of a former age, or of a totally different nature from the rest of men. As I recall, at this moment, several of his awfully striking attitudes, the chilling tide with which my blood begins to pour along my arteries, reminds me of the emotions produced by the first sight of Gray's introductory picture of his bard:

> "'On a rock, whose haughty brow
> Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,
> Robed in the sable garb of wo,
> With haggard eyes the poet stood,
> (Loose his beard and hoary hair
> Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air:)
> And with a poet's hand and prophet's fire,
> Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.'

"Guess my surprise, when on my arrival at Richmond, and mentioning the name of this man, I found not one person who had ever before heard of *James Waddel!!*"

It has often been questioned how far the ac-

complished author gave himself the license of fiction in this sketch. That Dr. Waddel was not so much unknown as is here said, is universally acknowledged in Virginia. That his pulpit costume was different from what is here described, has been already stated. That the author of the "British Spy," so far from being a transient stranger, was well acquainted with Dr. Waddel and his family, I know from them and from himself. In the year 1830 it was my privilege to spend a few delightful days in the company of Mr. Wirt, who then resided in Baltimore. It was natural for me to seek from his own lips some resolution of these doubts, and the result of my inquiries was as follows: Mr. Wirt stated to me, that so far from adding colors to the picture of Dr. Waddel's eloquence, he had fallen below the truth. He did not hesitate to say, that he had reason to believe that, in a different species of oratory, he was equal to Patrick Henry. He added, that in regard to the place, time, costume, and lesser

particulars, he had used an allowable liberty, grouping together events which had occurred apart, and perhaps imagining, as in a sermon, observations which had been uttered by the fireside.

A gentleman intimately connected with Patrick Henry, informed me that this great man was accustomed to speak in terms of unbounded admiration of Dr. Waddel's powers—pronouncing Davies and Waddel to be the greatest orators he had ever heard. And it may be observed, that both Henry and Waddel were, in early life, placed where they could catch the inspiration of Samuel Davies. I am indebted to a gentleman of Virginia, as well qualified to authenticate such a fact as any man living, that when Henry was a lad he used to drive his mother in a gig to the places in Hanover where Mr. Davies preached, and that in after-life the great orator of the Revolution spoke of the eloquence which he then heard and felt, as closely connected with his

own wonderful success. In no one of the three, however, was it the oratory which is taught by masters of elocution, or practiced before the mirrors of colleges; we may question, indeed, whether such methods ever resulted in eloquence. The bursts of Summerfield, Turner, and Larned will, to such as remember them, explain all that is meant. Good Father Mitchell once said to the writer, on the way from a memorable sacramental occasion at Old Concord, July 16th, 1826: "When other men preach, one looks to see who is affected; when Dr. Waddel preached, those who were *not* affected were the exception. Whole congregations were bathed in tears." Governor Barbour declared to me, in terms of enthusiasm, his judgment, that his old perceptor, Dr. Waddel, surpassed all orators whom he ever knew. Indeed, if we may credit the uncontradicted testimony of all who were cognizant of the facts, we must admit that the discourses of this eminent preacher were pronounced with a con-

trol over the emotions of hearers, such as is extremely rare in the annals of eloquence.

It was in pressing the essential, gracious, renovating truths of the Gospel that Dr. Waddel employed his singular faculty. Neverthe less, he sometimes came forward on patriotic services. As an instance, it may be recorded, that when Tate's company marched from the valley on their southward expedition, they were addressed at Midway, Rockbridge County, by Dr. Waddel. The fact is stated on the authority of David Steele, a member of the company, who was severely and repeatedly wounded at the battle of Guilford.

When the "British Spy" appeared, the article touching himself was sent to Dr. Waddel. The old gentleman was unfeignedly grieved, and in a reply to one of the complimentary letters which he received, he dictated the words, *Haud merita laus, opprobrium est.*

The independence and zeal of Dr. Waddel

brought him sometimes into conflict with the Establishment, in a day when it was hazardous for a dissenter to preach the Gospel. I regret the loss of a letter which was called forth by his having, on a certain occasion, been subjected to fine, for occupying a parish church. Unless I am in error, this letter can be furnished by a friend who coincides with me in a high relish for antiquarian scraps; I mean Charles C. Campbell, Esq.

It will be observed by the reader, that the materials for this sketch have been much compressed, and that many anecdotes, floating on the current of tradition, in Virginia, have been omitted. For this omission, I find my apology in the desire to avoid prolixity, but still more in the great variety apparent in the different versions, and the want of responsible vouchers.

Leaving the subject, I beg that this memoir may be regarded as a filial tribute to the

Presbyterian Church of my native State, and (may I add) to the venerable Presbytery by the laying on of whose hands I was ordained.*

---

*Throughout these papers, I have written Dr. Waddel's name as I find it in his numerous autographs in my possession, namely, with a single L. That he did, at a certain period, double the last letter, is certain; but it is no less certain that in several books once owned by him, the superfluous letter has been scrupulously erased.